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ASSEMBLING THE PIECES

Preparedness has been described as the process of identifying and assembling a challenging puzzle—a puzzle with many pieces.

There is truth to that statement. When organizing the elements of prevention, preparation, response, and recovery, it can become overwhelming. However, with patience and an ongoing focus any house of worship can establish a credible plan.



In this issue of our newsletter, we will outline many pieces of the preparedness puzzle as they related to (1) individuals and fami-

lies, (2) houses of worship, and (3) the local neighborhood or community.

BEING A VICTIM OR BEING AN AGENT OF GRACE

You hear much talk about the need to be ready for the unexpected—the storm, the flood, the pandemic, the terrorist act. But how many of us are really prepared for any of these situations?

The FCIA Steering Committee has heard that no more than 40% of the public is ready for a disaster.

That means 60% of the population is not ready.

In order for a congregation and community to be resilient it requires each individual and each family to be prepared.

Simply stated, all of us have the opportunity to choose. We can personally

choose to be a victim or an agent of grace and mercy.

Take the time now to invest, not only, in your own wellbeing but encourage others to assemble a kit, talk to their family about a plan, and get involved with your congregation's plans of being involved during the next disaster.

THREE SPHERES OF PREPAREDNESS

As noted in our lead article, there are three distinctive spheres of preparedness that FCIA is focusing on in 2008.

Within each sphere there are pieces of the preparedness puzzle that leaders in the faith community will need to assemble as they organize their specific plans.

This article will highlight a few of the initial pieces each house of worship should address.

Individual & Family Preparedness

It is essential that leaders encourage their members to prepare. The better prepared individuals and families are, the greater

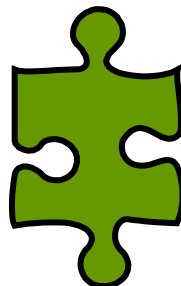
opportunity your congregation will have to help others.

One wonderful resource in promoting awareness among members is the **Ready—Pack—Go** campaign (*Note the related article on page 3.*) Although the focus of the campaign is primarily directed to prepare an emergency kit for the home, it is important to encourage people to have a kit for their workplace and in their car.

House Of Worship Preparedness

In this sphere, the focus is on how to keep your house of worship functioning in terms of its operations and ministries.

Development of a continuity of operations plan (COOP) is critical including **sheltering-in-place**. The first place to seek assistance would be your respective association or judicatory body.



Ask if they have a planning template and if they do not, ask for copies of plans drafted by other congregations. Each house of worship will organize their efforts differently based on their leadership and how their committee structure has been established.

Clergy will play a critical role not only in overseeing the congregation but will also become intensely involved with pastoral care during a crisis. Therefore, part of the COOP will need to address how the clergy will interact with the community, lay leaders, staff, and others.

A challenging puzzle piece will be **developing ways to ensure your ministries will continue** regardless of a given

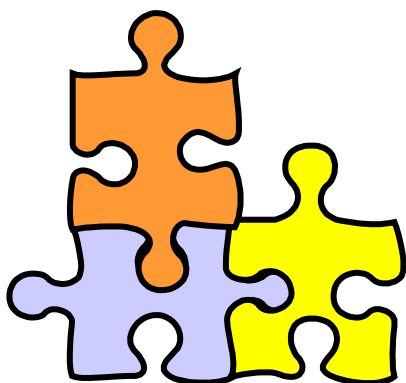
CALENDAR NOTES:

FCIA General Meetings begin at 2:00 p.m. These gatherings are open to all faith communities. The dates for the rest of the year are . . .
 March 12
 May 14
 July 9
 September 10
 November 12

The meeting schedule for the **FCIA Interfaith Emergency Planning Steering Committee** varies however anyone interested in rolling up their sleeves is welcome to attend. Contact the Fairfax County Community Interfaith Liaison Office at 703.324.5185 or 324.3453 for the most current meeting schedule.

Time to register for the free **Community Emergency Response Training** (CERT). Faith groups are welcomed. For more information, visit... <http://fairfaxcountycert.blogspot.com> or contact Derek Rowan at Derek@hlp.net.

September is Preparedness Month—mark your calendars.



READY—PACK—GO 2008

Planning is well underway for the individual and family preparedness initiative known as Ready—Pack—Go 2008.

Materials are currently being produced for use by houses of worship. Training sessions will be held April 29, May 1, and May 3 to discuss effective ways to share the readiness message with congregational members and families.

The message that the Interfaith Emergency Planning Steering Committee is communicating through this initiative is . . . be **READY** (that is: have a personal plan) . . . **PACK** (have your supply of food, water, and essential materials in a container) . . . and be prepared to **GO** (which means take your container and go upstairs in case of flooding; downstairs in case of strong

wind; or evacuate the community in case of a larger scale event.

This faith based initiative is based on a successful effort that was sponsored in 2005 by the Fairfax County Citizen Corps Council.

To register for the free training, contact the Fairfax County Community Interfaith Liaison Office.



TELL US YOUR STORY . . .

What piece of the preparedness puzzle have you completed? What piece are you working on now?

We can all learn from each other. Whether you are just beginning to prepare for the unexpected OR you have completed your plans and are "ready for anything."

Send an email message about what you are doing to prepare your house of worship and your members. And how are you are engaging the local neighborhood? Thank you.

IMMEDIATE BENEFITS FOR A HOUSE OF WORSHIP (A TWO-PART SERIES)

There always seems to be more to do than can be accomplished in a day. And yet, every day there is a potential for an emergency or disaster.

Taking the time, energy, and finances to prepare for natural or man-caused disasters is an investment by a house of worship. However, if you are thinking that the only benefit of being prepared manifests itself during an actual internal emergency or a community disaster, then it is

time to "re-boot" your thinking.

On a personal level, getting prepared touches the spiritual, emotional, and physical aspects of life.

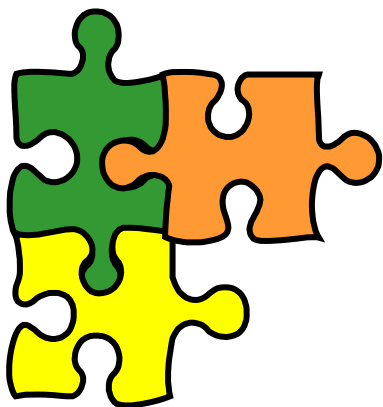
For clergy, lay leaders, and staff preparing for the unexpected is a challenge and, at the same time, creates a powerful opportunity for breathing life into what it means to be "in community."

Our top six immediate

benefits for focusing on preparedness include:

- Improved operations.
- Enhanced awareness of stewardship.
- Individual growth and education.
- Improved neighborhood relationships.
- Greater visibility of the congregation.
- And being ready in case the disaster hits today.

THREE SPHERES OF PREPAREDNESS (CONT.)



situation. In other words, how will you continue to have meaningful interaction with children, youth, and adults?

As you review your membership as well as those individuals and families that you have relationship with through outreach and missions, if anyone has a medical issue then your house of worship should encourage that person to sign up on the **Fairfax County Medical Needs Registry**. *(For more information on the Registry, call 703.324.9000.)*

Community Preparedness

This sphere focuses on how your congregation is integrated with the local neighborhood.

Think about becoming involved with **Worship Watch** or **Neighborhood Watch**. Contact your local law enforcement department for a presentation.

Is your house of worship connected to your **association or denominational response/relief efforts**?

Are you connected with local groups or networks such as the **Northern Virginia VOAD**?

Has your clergy been briefed on the **Fairfax County Disaster Chaplain Corps**?

Have your congregational leaders invited **Citizen Corps** to your congregation to discuss their programs?

Houses of worship have opportunity to partner with many organizations. Two quick examples include the **American Red Cross** regarding shelters or staging areas and the **Fairfax County Social Needs Registry** to support those who are vulnerable and hard-to-reach prior to and during an emergency or disaster. *(For more information on the Registry, call 703.324.9000.)*

As you assemble these pieces, other issues will become apparent. Don't get frustrated trying to assemble your puzzle. It will take focus and persistence. Having a solid plan will be worth the effort now and during the next emergency /disaster.

WOULD YOU LIKE MORE INFORMATION THE WORK OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE?

Maybe you would like to become better connected to others in the faith community working on preparedness?

If so, contact . . .

FCIA Interfaith Emergency Planning Steering Committee

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FCIA Interfaith Emergency Planning Newsletter

The newsletter is released throughout the year among the broad faith community in Fairfax County.

This publication is compiled by Lewis Saylor, editor. To submit ideas, news items, articles, and other resources for the faith community, contact the editor at . . .

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